

SPEAKING POINTS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

- Last December, our colleague, Kim Campbell, tabled proposed amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act in the House
- Bill C-108 will be coming forward for Second Reading on Thursday
- I know that some of you have expressed concerns about some of these human rights proposals
- I want to take this occasion to talk to you about Bill C-108 and explain why I think it is important for this government
- First, this Bill includes some significant enhancements to human rights protections and will advance this government's record on the human rights front
- Second, the Bill fulfils long standing commitments that this government made as far back as 1986
- Third, I believe that this Bill enhances rather than detracts from the values that this government is committed to preserve
- Colleagues, I know that a particular concern relates to adding "sexual orientation" as a prohibited ground of discrimination

- The provision will ensure that members of the homosexual community receive the same basic human rights protection from discrimination in employment and services as other Canadians
- It is consistent with the direction that the courts have already taken when ruling on the Charter and the Canadian Human Rights Act
- Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, British Columbia and the Yukon have already amended their provincial Human Rights Codes to include anti-discrimination protections for homosexuals
- But I understand your fear that this protection might have unintended consequences and lead to an erosion of family values
- I believe, however, that the protections built into the Bill as well as the direction of recent court cases are adequate protection for these important values
- As you know, Bill C-108 includes a definition of "marital status" which refers only to heterosexual relationships: same-sex couples are excluded
- The Bill also includes other important human rights protections for the disabled, natives, elderly workers and others

- It provides a balanced approach to the resolution of diverse concerns and advances the interests of fairness and efficiency of the human rights process
- I believe this Bill embodies some of the most noble values that this government represents
- It protects the most vulnerable among us from discrimination
- We are both strong and wise enough to want this as part of our legacy to this country